



Bridges and Bridges for Long Term Homeless Households Rental Assistance Program Guide

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Goals

The following are the goals of the Bridges Program:

- To provide a housing subsidy for persons with serious mental illness and/or for persons with a serious mental illness who are also experiencing long-term homelessness, who are eligible to receive a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher subsidy or who can become eligible to receive a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher based on successful participation in the Bridges Program. This subsidy will only be provided while the person is on a waiting list for a federal or other permanent housing subsidy program or formally agrees to apply for a waiting list when one is opened.
- To maintain and foster the integration of persons with serious mental illness and/or persons with serious mental illness who are also experiencing long-term homelessness into their communities through a partnership of housing subsidy and supportive services.

Introduction

Minnesota Housing (the Agency) was established in 1973 to ensure the availability of decent, safe and affordable housing for low and moderate income households. To achieve these goals, the Agency is active in lending and financing, allocating housing grants and subsidies, advocating for affordable housing, establishing state housing policies, and providing technical assistance to housing sponsors.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) received legislative funding in 1991 to begin a housing initiative for persons with serious and persistent mental illness. DHS began a modified Section 8 program.

The 1993, Minnesota Legislature authorized and appropriated funds to Minnesota Housing under provisions of Minnesota Statutes Section 462A.2097 to operate a rental assistance program for persons with mental illness.

In 2005, the Agency Board authorized and appropriated funds from the Ending Long Term Homelessness Initiative Fund (ELHIF) to be administered through the Bridges Program, with provision that households assisted with ELHIF meet the Bridges Program Requirements and the definition of long-term homelessness.

In 2009, DHS and Minnesota Housing agreed to change the Bridges program definition of eligible persons to those with serious mental illness.

Minnesota Housing and DHS, in partnership, currently administer the Bridges/ELHIF program which provides rental assistance for persons with serious mental illness and/or for persons with serious mental illness who are also experiencing long term homelessness.

Bridges provides rental assistance to households under uniform administrative procedures. The uniform administrative procedures are contained in this Bridges and Bridges for Long Term Homeless Households Rental Assistance Program Guide.

Chapter 1 – Definition of Terms

Administrative Fee: An amount of funds a Housing Agency may request to pay for expenses in operating Bridges, based on the total number of households participating each month.

Adult Mental Health Initiative (AMHI): Law of Minnesota for 1995, Chapter 207, Article 8 (with 1997 amendments) Approved projects by the Commissioner of the Department of Human Services to test alternatives to or the enhanced coordination of the delivery of mental health services required under the Minnesota comprehensive adult mental health act.

Applicant: A person with serious mental illness who has made application to the Local Mental Health Authority and whose eligibility is being determined.

Assisted Unit: A unit found eligible for inclusion in Bridges, occupied by a participant who has executed an approved lease with the landlord, is receiving a Bridges subsidy and whose landlord has executed a Bridges Contract with the Housing Agency.

Bridges Agreement: A document Minnesota Housing executes with a Housing Agency outlining respective responsibilities in administering Bridges.

Bridges Contract: An agreement executed by a Housing Agency and landlord, setting out terms that must be met for the landlord to receive subsidy payments on behalf of a participant residing in an eligible unit.

Bridges Program: A State rental assistance program for persons with serious mental illness waiting for a permanent housing subsidy.

Briefing Session: A meeting at which the eligible participant receives an explanation of the program and instructions for leasing an eligible unit.

Case Management: Activities that are designed to help adults with serious mental illness in gaining access to services for consumer's mental health needs. Case management services include developing an individual community support plan, referring and assisting the person in obtaining needed mental health and other services, ensuring coordination of services, and monitoring the delivery of services.

Certificate of Participation: A form listing unit size and rent limits that authorizes an eligible participant to find a market rate unit.

Community Mental Health Centers (CMHC): An entity defined in Minnesota State Statutes which provides a wide range of services for individuals having mental or emotional disorders, mental retardation, alcoholism, drug abuse, or any other psychiatric condition. Services typically include education and prevention; consultation to schools, courts and health and welfare agencies; outpatient diagnostic and treatment services; and rehabilitation services. In

many counties, community support services are contracted by the counties to a Community Mental Health Center.

Community Support Services Program (CSP): A program, under the clinical supervision of a mental health professional, designed to help adults with serious mental illness function and remain in the community. CSP services include:

- client outreach,
- medication monitoring,
- assistance in independent living skills,
- development of employability and work related opportunities,
- crisis assistance,
- psychosocial rehabilitation,
- help in applying for government benefits, and
- housing support services.

Comprehensive Mental Health Act: A statute that is the essence of the mental health system in Minnesota. The statute is Minnesota Sections 245.461 - 245.486.

Consumer: A person with serious mental illness (SMI).

Cooperative Agreement: An outline of the respective roles and responsibilities of a Housing Agency and a Local Mental Health Authority.

DHS: The Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Eligible Participant: A household with an adult member who has a serious mental illness and a gross household income under 50 percent of the area median.

Eligible Payment: A monthly rent, a security deposit.

Eligible Unit: A market rate property which meets program criteria and Housing Quality Standards.

Fair Market Rent (FMR): HUD established rent limits for geographical areas.

Government Data Practices Act Disclosure Statement: Minnesota Statutes 13.04, Subdivision 2, requiring organizations to inform individuals about recording data.

Gross Household Income: All income projected for the next 12 months by household members age 18 and over.

Homeless Person: As defined in the Stuart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987, a homeless person is an individual who lacks a fixed and adequate nighttime residence. As interpreted by the Minnesota Interagency Task Force on Homelessness and the Mental Health Division of the Department of Human Services, this may include but is not restricted to:

1. An individual or family that lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; or
2. An individual or family whose primary nighttime residence is:
 - a. A supervised, publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill),
 - b. An institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or
 - c. A public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

The term does not include any individual imprisoned or otherwise detained under an Act of the Congress or a State law.

Households Experiencing Long Term Homelessness: Individuals, unaccompanied youth, or families with children who lack a permanent place continuously for a year or more or at least four times in the past three years. Any period of institutionalization or incarceration shall be excluded from the determination of the duration of homelessness. NOTE: Minnesota's definition does not require that the person have a disabling condition. Time spent in transitional housing is also excluded from the determination of the duration of homelessness.

See the Minnesota Housing website for further clarification on the LTH definition

http://www.mnhousing.gov/initiatives/housing-assistance/homelessness/MHFA_001628.aspx.

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS): A computerized database that allows organizations that provide services to people experiencing homelessness to collect client information electronically and easily produce required reports. The mission of Minnesota's HMIS is to provide standardized and timely information to improve access to housing and services, and strengthen our efforts to end homelessness. The statewide goal is to eventually provide as comprehensive a picture of homelessness as possible, by incorporating information from all emergency shelters, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing providers, as well as other points of contact for people experiencing homelessness, such as outreach programs, drop-in centers, and food shelves. The Agency requires all fund recipients for programs targeting households experiencing long-term homelessness to utilize the HMIS system.

Housing Agency (HA): A local unit of government under contract to provide housing subsidy services.

Housing Assistance Payment (HAP): A subsidy portion of the rent.

Housing Quality Standards (HQS): Standard used in Section 8 assistance for inspection of market rate housing that determine that a unit is decent, safe, and sanitary.

Housing Support Services: A CSP service that:

- assists the adult in obtaining, moving, and retaining housing;
- provides referrals for resources to local public housing authorities, subsidized housing programs, Realtors, private apartment rental services, or similar housing services;
- assists in applying for housing program subsidies;
- assists in appealing denial, suspension, reduction, or termination of a housing subsidy;
- mediates, and teach coping and mediation skills to resolve disputes with landlord or roommate;
- provides ongoing support; and
- provides periodic home visits to ensure health and safety.

HUD: The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Informal Hearing: A meeting requested by a consumer to contest a determination of ineligibility made by the Housing Agency or Local Mental Health Authority

Landlord: An individual(s), a partnership or corporation, holding title to a property.

Lease: A contract between the participant and landlord under which the participant may occupy a unit.

Lease Addendum: An addendum to the lease executed between the participant and the landlord with a form specific to the Bridges program and approved by the HA.

Local Mental Health Authority (LMHA): A county operating under the Comprehensive Mental Health Act.

Mental Health Housing Mission: Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 245.461, Subdivision 4.

"The commissioner shall ensure that the housing services provided as part of a comprehensive mental health service system:

- (1) allow all persons with mental illness to live in stable, affordable housing, in settings that maximize community integration and opportunities for acceptance;
- (2) allow persons with mental illness to actively participate in the selection of their housing from those living environments available to the general public; and
- (3) provide necessary support regardless of where persons with mental illness choose to live."

Mental Health Division (MHD): A division of the Department of Human Services.

Mental Health Professional: A person providing clinical services in the treatment of mental illness who is qualified in at least one of the following ways:

- in psychiatric nursing: a registered nurse who is licensed under sections 148.171 to 148.285, and who is certified as a clinical specialist in adult psychiatric and mental health nursing by the American nurses association or who has a master's degree in nursing or one of the behavioral sciences or related fields from an accredited college or university or its equivalent, with at least 4,000 hours of post-master's supervised experience in the delivery of clinical services in the treatment of mental illness;
- in clinical social work: a person licensed as an independent clinical social worker under section 148B.21, subdivision 6, or a person with a master's degree in social work from an accredited college or university, with at least 4,000 hours of post-master's supervised experience in the delivery of clinical services in the treatment of mental illness;
- in psychology: a psychologist licensed under sections 148.88 to 148.98 who has stated to the board of psychology competencies in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness;
- in psychiatry: a physician licensed under chapter 147 and certified by the American board of psychiatry and neurology or eligible for board certification in psychiatry;
- in marriage and family therapy: the mental health professional must be a marriage and family therapist licensed under sections 148B.29 to 148B.39 with at least two years of post-master's supervised experience in the delivery of clinical services in the treatment of mental illness; or (6) in allied fields: a person with a master's degree from an accredited college or university in one of the behavioral sciences or related fields, with at least 4,000 hours of post-master's supervised experience in the delivery of clinical services in the treatment of mental illness.

Minnesota Housing Mission: Minnesota Housing finances and advances affordable housing opportunities for low and moderate income Minnesotans to enhance quality of life and foster strong communities.

Occupancy Standards: Guidelines set by HUD used to determine the maximum number of bedrooms and Fair Market Rents.

Operating Area: A geographic area in which the Housing Agency operates the Bridges program.

Participant: A person with serious mental illness who has been awarded a Bridges subsidy.

Participant Rent: A portion of the rent payable by the participant to the landlord

Permanent Supportive Housing: Permanent rental housing affordable to the population served where support services are available to residents. Permanent supportive housing is available to individuals and families with multiple barriers to obtaining and maintaining housing, including those who are formally homeless or at risk of homelessness and those with mental illness, substance abuse disorders, and/or HIV/AIDS.

Person with Serious Mental Illness (SMI): An individual with a disability described in the Minnesota Comprehensive Mental Health Act. (Attachment II.)

Preferences: A priority by which applicants are selected.

Procedural Guide: A document developed to implement the Bridges program under statutory requirements.

Reasonable Accommodations: Variance of the rules granted because someone has a disability

Recertification: An annual review of the participant's income to determine eligibility.

Release of Information: A signed and dated authorization by the participant allowing the HA and LMHA to share information about the participant.

Regional Treatment Center (RTC): A facility where the state provides active inpatient treatment for persons with serious mental illness, developmental disabilities, chemical dependency and/or elderly who have complex medical conditions and challenging behaviors.

Rent During Crisis: A payment of the full rent when the participant is unable to meet financial obligations due to a medical or psychiatric crisis.

Rent Limits: The Section 8 HCV amount allowed for a unit determined by Fair Market Rent/Payment Standards and any HUD approved exceptions.

Rule 36: A DHS rule that describes the legal requirements of a licensed Community Based Residential Treatment Facility for persons with mental illness.

Subsidy Rent: A portion of the rent paid by the HA that equals the difference between participant rent and the total rent not to exceed the local payment standard. (Also referred to as HAP.)

Chapter 2 – Program Overview

Bridges is a program that is meant to fill the gap between a person paying a large portion of their income towards housing or having no place to live and successfully being on a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher. In order to successfully “bridge” between these housing circumstances, it is important that the individual be able to move onto a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher when their name comes to the top of the waiting list.

Bridges will provide a temporary housing subsidy for participants in which at least one adult member has a serious mental illness and whose household gross income is under 50 percent of the area median.

The Ending Long Term Homelessness Initiative Fund (ELHIF) will be administered through the Bridges Rental Assistance Program and provide a temporary housing subsidy for households in which at least one adult member has a serious mental illness and meets the definition of long-term homeless and whose household income is at or below 50 percent of the area median. The administration of ELHIF funds are subject to the same rules and procedures as the Bridges program. Administrators of ELHIF funds will be responsible for a few additional requirements such as determining long-term homelessness eligibility, and utilizing the State’s Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

Bridges/ELHIF funding may be used to pay rent directly to a landlord, security deposits, and the full rent, for up to 90 days, during medical or psychiatric crisis. The housing subsidy is provided while the participant is on a waiting list for federal or other permanent housing subsidy programs.

Since the program will serve as a transition to a permanent subsidy, many provisions of the Bridges/ELHIF Program are similar to those in Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV). These include verification of income, leasing procedures, federal housing quality standards, and payment standard limits to cap program rents. Bridges/ELHIF subsidy is determined by a calculation using gross income and does not include deductions as in the HCV program. The maximum Bridges/ELHIF subsidy is the difference between the participant’s rent and the total rent up to the payment standard.

Once initial eligibility has been determined, a Bridges/ELHIF participant remains eligible to receive a housing subsidy provided that:

- 30 percent of participant income does not exceed the full rent for the assisted unit;
- the participant is not paying more than 40% of their gross annual income in rent (*if the participant rents a unit that is within the area’s payment standard rates, based on the appropriate bedroom size, the tenant’s monthly payment is 30% of their monthly income. The participant can rent a unit that exceeds the area’s payment standard providing that the tenant’s portion does not exceed 40% of their monthly income*);

- the participant applies for and accepts a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher when one is offered;
- the participant does not commit fraud;
- the participant does not engage in illegal drug-related or violent criminal activities; or,
- the Minnesota Legislature continues the Bridges funding appropriation.

Minnesota Housing (the Agency), in conjunction with the Department of Human Services (DHS), will monitor and evaluate the performance of the Housing Agency and Local Mental Health Authority involved in administering Bridges as well as assess the overall effectiveness of the program. Minnesota Housing, DHS and the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness will monitor and utilize HMIS as a tool to evaluate the success rate of those Housing Agencies and Local Mental Authorities involved in administering ELHIF through the Bridges Program.

Chapter 3 – General Administrative Requirements

3.01 Period of Operations

The Bridges program will provide rental subsidies in accordance with Minnesota legislation that authorizes and appropriates funds, under provision of Minnesota Statute Section 462A.2097.

The agency may establish a rental housing assistance program for persons of low income or for persons with a mental illness or families that include an adult family member with a mental illness. Rental assistance may be in the form of direct rental subsidies for housing for persons or families with incomes of up to 50 percent of the area median income as determined by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, adjusted for families of five or more. Housing for the mentally ill must be operated in coordination with social service providers who provide services requested by tenants. Direct rental subsidies must be administered by the agency for the benefit of eligible tenants. Financial assistance provided under this section must be in the form of vendor payments whenever possible. HIST: 1995 c 224 s 108

Those administering ELHIF Funds through the Bridges Program will provide rental subsidies in accordance with the Minnesota Statute Section 462A.2097 stated above and to households who meet the definition of long-term homelessness.

3.02 Area of Operations

Each Housing Agency will operate in the geographic area indicated in its Bridges/ELHIF Agreement. Any change in this designation must be approved by the Agency.

Each Local Mental Health Authority will operate under the authority of the local county and within an Adult Mental Health Initiative. It will perform the duties indicated in the Cooperative Agreement. Any changes in the Agreement must be approved by the county. The county needs to notify the Department of Human Services - Mental Health Division of these changes.

3.03 Cooperative Agreement

The Bridges Program is intended to operate as a partnership between the Housing Agency, providing housing subsidies, and a Local Mental Health Authority (LMHA) which operates in an Adult Mental Health Initiative providing housing support services to participants. Each Housing Agency administering Bridges/ELHIF must enter into a Cooperative Agreement with a mental health authority to coordinate the implementation of the program. The goal of the Agreement must be to assist individuals with serious mental illnesses (SMI) and individuals with SMI and who are also long-term homeless (LTH) in obtaining and retaining stable, affordable housing within their community. Other aspects of the agreement should contain:

- Designation of the parties (LMHA and HA) entering into the agreement
 - Unique features of the parties

- Terms of the Agreement:
 - duration of the agreement
- Purpose:
 - to foster cooperation between parties;
 - to assist persons with SMI and/or SMI and LTH to access appropriate housing, treatment, supportive services and income supports; and
 - to assist persons with SMI and/or SMI and LTH to live in the community.
- Guiding principles:
 - persons with SMI and/or SMI and LTH are full members of the community with all rights, privileges, opportunities, and responsibilities accorded all people;
 - all persons with SMI and/or SMI & LTH will not be required to accept services; and
 - support services are:
 - based on need, preferences and desires;
 - offered in the least restrictive manner to the individual; and
 - flexible in location, intensity and schedule.
- Responsibilities
 - Lists the roles and responsibilities of the agency and the initiative;
 - the clients to be served;
 - the services available to clients,
 - the site of services, the times available, and the manner in which these services can be obtained
- Participant Rights and Responsibilities
 - describes the rights and responsibilities of participants;
- Implementation and Evaluation
 - modification, amending or termination of the agreement;
 - resolution of problems;
 - interagency meetings, including frequency, attendees and dates, if known
 - involvement of participants; and
 - designation of liaisons to oversee, facilitate, monitor, and evaluate agreement.

The input of current and past participants (consumers) is necessary for review of the program and identifying areas of strength and improvement.

Each Housing Agency shall provide the Agency with a copy of the Cooperative Agreement as well as any subsequent amendments or terminations. Minnesota Housing and the DHS will review the Cooperative Agreement and make suggestions for modification. Executed copies of the Cooperative Agreement will be maintained by all parties to the contract. (A sample Cooperative Agreement is provided in Attachment I.)

3.04 Fair Housing/Affirmative Action

It is the policy of the Agency, and will be the policy of the Housing Agency in administering Bridges/ELHIF, to work affirmatively to insure that all persons, regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, sex, religion, marital status, age, family status, handicapped status, sexual or affectional orientation, or reliance on public assistance will be given fair and equal opportunity when applying for and participating in Bridges. The Housing Agency also warrants that when participating in Bridges/ELHIF, it will comply with affirmative action policies applicable to doing business with the state of Minnesota.

3.05 Data Privacy

In working with applicants and participants, the Housing Agency and Local Mental Health Authority must comply with applicable data privacy laws and regulations. This includes the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act that sets policies on information that can be obtained, stored, and/or released in connection with public programs. The Minnesota Housing Government Data Practices Act Disclosure Statement form can be found on the Agency website at: http://www.mnhousing.gov/idc/groups/public/documents/document/mhfa_002380.rtf.

This form is to be completed at initial occupancy and retained in the participant's file. In addition, HA and LMHA need to use their own release of information forms to obtain authority for each to share information on participants and complete income verification inquiries. Finally, administrators of ELHIF funds need to obtain the proper releases to enter tenant data into the HMIS system. This form is available on the HMIS website at: <http://www.hmismn.org/forms/clientconsent.php>

All releases of information that are signed by the tenant should be kept in both HA and LMHA files.

3.06 Program Obligations - Check List of Responsibility

The following is a check list of activities that must be carried out in implementing the Bridges/ELHIF program. For each activity, the responsible agency(ies) is checked. Use this list as a tool for program development and review, and as a resource for the creation of Cooperative Agreement.

Activity	HA	AMHI/ LMHA
1. Publish information on the availability and nature of the		

Activity	HA	AMHI/ LMHA
program.		
2. Explain the program to landlords, Regional Treatment Centers (RTC), community-based residential treatment facilities, counties, shelters, social service staff, applicants, and participants.		
3. Encourage landlords and managers to make units available for the program.		
4. Develop data privacy authorization between HA and LHMA.		
5. Provide housing options outside areas of economic and racial concentration.		
6. Outreach to potential applicants meeting Bridges preferences: a. long-term homeless and homeless persons; b. persons residing in a RTC, or receiving a temporary rent subsidy through DHS; c. persons residing in Community Based Treatment Facilities (Rule 36); or d. persons living in substandard and rent burdened units.		
7. Verify diagnosis of persons with serious mental illness.		
8. For Administrators of ELHIF, verify that participant meets the State's Definition of Long Term Homelessness		
9. Verify income and assets.		
10. Maintain an applicant waiting list.		
11. Conduct program briefings explaining participant's rights and responsibilities, including payment responsibilities.		
12. Verify applicant's Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher eligibility and waiting list status.		
13. Compute subsidy and participant rent.		
14. Assist participant with housing appeals for denial of eligibility.		
15. Assist participant with social service appeal for denial of eligibility.		
16. Assist participant in locating appropriate housing.		
17. Negotiate lease and conditions with landlord.		
18. Determine eligibility of selected units based on rent, unit size and lease provisions.		
19. Conduct Housing Quality Standards inspection of selected units.		
20. Enter into, administer, and enforce Bridges/ELHIF Contracts with landlords.		
21. Make payments to landlords or utility companies.		
22. Conduct annual and interim recertification of participant		

Activity	HA	AMHI/ LMHA
eligibility.		
23. Terminate Bridges/ELHIF subsidy for participants who violate program regulations, become ineligible for Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher, or refuse Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher subsidy when offered.		
24. Maintain financial management records.		
25. Maintain consumer demographic information.		
25. Report required information to Minnesota Housing		
27. ELHIF Administrators shall utilize HMIS to report data on behalf of the assisted long-term homeless households		
28. Provide 24-hour emergency response to landlords, participants and HA.		
29. Assist participants, who chose to be served, with the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. case management services; b. diagnosis and treatment of serious mental illnesses; c. rehabilitation, vocational training, and employment assistance; d. income support and benefits; e. general health care and dental services; f. alcohol and/or other drug abuse treatment; g. consumer and family involvement; and h. legal protection (including protection provided under civil rights laws, such as the Fair Housing Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990), and i. screening criteria of the housing agency. 		
30. Notify HA of absences by participants during medical or psychiatric crisis.		
31. Recalculate subsidy payment and utilities for participants during medical or psychiatric crisis.		
32. Develop and maintain a list of housing options for persons with SMI and/or SMI and LTH.		
33. Partner to increase the supply and options of housing available to persons with serious mental illnesses (e.g., locale, style, rent levels, flexible services, integration).		

3.07 Applicant/Participant Records

Each Housing Agency will establish files for applicants and participants. These files are required to contain copies of all participant and property related forms listed below. Most of the

following forms are available on the Agency website at:

http://www.mnhousing.gov/initiatives/housing-assistance/rental/MHFA_000479.aspx.

Required tenant file documentation:

	Required in specific format	Required, comparable format accepted	Required Annually
1. Application for Bridges/ELHIF Programs (Form 2)	X		
2. Preliminary screening forms developed locally for intake		X	
3. Minnesota Government Data Practices Act and Disclosure Statement and Acknowledgement (signed by all adults 18 or older on lease.)	X		
4. Verification of Serious Mental Illness (Form 4) Specific records and documents detailing the nature of applicant's illness should be retained by the AMHI/LMHA	X		
5. Certificate of Participation –Statement of Obligation (Form 6)	X		
6. Consumer Agreement for Requirements for Continued Eligibility (Form 7)	X		
7. Income and Asset Verification		X	X
8. Computation of Gross Income, Participant and Subsidy Rent (Form 8)		X	X
9. Lead-Base Paint Certification (if applicable)	X		
10. Housing Quality Standards inspections	X		X
11. Approved Leases (Form 11)		X	
12. Approved Lease Addendum (Form 12)	X		
13. Approved Lease Amendment/Extension (Form 13) when applicable	X		
14. Bridges Contract (Form 14)	X		
15. Certification of payment during crisis (Form 24) if applicable	X		
16. Verification of Long Term Homelessness and HMIS Data release	X		

form (ELHIF only)			
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Tenant Files must also include the following correspondence and notes when applicable:

1. Eligibility/ineligibility notices sent to applicants/participants by HA or AMHI/LMHA		X	
2. Letters and notifications of outcome from informal hearings		X	
3. Documents and correspondence concerning the participant's application and participation in Bridges		X	
4. Initialed and dated notations regarding conversations about the participant.		X	
5. Termination Notice		X	

The main program file for each applicant and participant is to be kept by the Housing Agency. The Housing Agency may share with the Adult Mental Health Initiative/Local Mental Health Authority any documentation that may be needed by the mental health in carrying out its responsibilities to provide housing support services, provided a release of information has been completed. The AMHI/LMHA needs to retain a copy of the release of information in their permanent records. The sharing of information and documents should be covered in the Cooperative Agreement.

3.08 Monitoring and Evaluation

Minnesota Housing and DHS will conduct ongoing evaluation of the financial and participant reports submitted by Housing Agencies. Management reviews of the HA and LMHA partnership administering Bridges/ELHIF will also be conducted on a regular basis. The review will contain the following components:

- Local Mental Health Authority adherence to the procedural guide:
 - Cooperative Agreement;
 - Support Services; and
 - Participant files;
- Interview of case managers, community support staff, and participants;
- Housing Agency's adherence to the procedural guide;
- Financial records detailing:
 - Expenditures for subsidy payments to landlords;
 - Security deposits ; and
 - Payments during medical and psychiatric crises.
- Cooperative Agreement;

- Program Eligibility
- Maintenance and retention of participant records;
- Waiting list including selection criteria and preferences;
- Unit size; and
- Exceptions;
- Participant files:
 - Verification of income and eligibility;
 - Calculation of participant rent;
 - FMR limits/payment standards;
 - Forms;
 - Lease and Admission, Interim and Recertification; and
 - HQS (units may be inspected).

3.09 Monthly Data Reporting

The draw request form contains a monthly participant log which must be completed and submitted for every household experiencing activity such as a housing subsidy paid, new admission, annual recertification, unit transfer, interim rent adjustment, or termination with the monthly payment request for the applicable monthly reconciliation period. Minnesota Housing collects data on the household's previous living situation and the extent of the household's homelessness prior to program intake. The Agency is also tracking data on the reason that the household left the Bridges/ELHIF program. Please refer to the drop down lists on the monthly participant log to select the applicable response(s). The draw request form is an Excel form that is utilized for Bridges, ELHIF and the Housing Trust Fund Rental Assistance Program. The Agency will accept this form electronically. You can find this form on the Agency website at www.mnhousing.gov. Click on Multifamily Rental Partners / Program Administration / Rental Assistance.

3.10 Financial Management/Records

Bridges funds will be disbursed to the Housing Agency. The Housing Agency must establish one or more separate bank accounts which may be checking and/or savings accounts in which subsidy payments and the administrative fee will be placed. The Housing Agency may combine these funds with other Agency or non-Agency funds in a consolidated account, provided that the Housing Agency's banking system can adequately segregate the various restricted funds within one account. Any interest earned on these funds may be retained locally and may be used in paying administrative expenses. The Housing Agency must maintain and make available, for inspection, records of payments to landlords and utility companies at the Agency's request.

Any Housing Agency employee authorized to sign or countersign Agency checks, or checks to landlords, must be covered by a fidelity and forgery bond in an amount equal to the lesser of

\$25,000 or one third of the Housing Agency's Bridges contract authority. Acceptable forms include a copy of an effective policy or certification from the insurance carrier that indicates the policy's effective dates and terms of coverage and that meet the above requirements. Housing Agency employees so designated must have received formal authorization by the Housing Agency's board, and a copy provided to Minnesota Housing.

3.11 Requesting Bridges Funds

Housing Agencies will prepare and submit to Minnesota Housing monthly payment requests which detail actual expenditures for the previous month. The draw request form is an Excel document that can be electronically submitted to the Agency and can be used for the Bridges, ELHIF and Housing Trust Fund Rental Assistance Program. You can find this form on the Agency website at www.mnhousing.gov. Click on Multifamily Rental Partners / Program Administration / Rental Assistance. The due date for the monthly payment requests is on or before the 15th of every month. The information collected on the draw request form includes:

- Actual expenses incurred in the payment of rent and administrative fees for the previous month and
- A monthly participant log for the previous month which is attached to the monthly payment request and consists of information such as participant name, unit address, move-in date, move-out date, gross rent, participant rent, subsidy amount, security deposit amount.

Minnesota Housing will utilize the monthly participant log and payment request data to reconcile the amount to be sent to the Housing Agency. To assure that housing assistance payments and administrative fees are received in a timely manner, request for funds must be received no later than the 15th of the month. At the end of the program year, the Housing Agency will refund any excess subsidy funds or administrative fees not carried over to the new funding year.

3.12 Administrative Fee

Rental Assistance Administrative Fee Policy. The agency at the time of selection or grant renewal shall approve and pay administrators of tenant-based and sponsor-based rental assistance a monthly administrative fee for each month in which an eligible household resides in a rental housing unit. The rental assistance grant agreement will reference the eligible fee that the administrator can collect per assisted household.

The agency will utilize a percentage rate schedule to calculate the maximum administrative fee for programs that offer a subsidy structure similar to the Section 8 program model. Additional compensation may be available for programs with a minimum geographic service area of a 50 mile radius.

The Percentage Rate Schedule. The agency has developed a compensation schedule for applicants/grantees who administer a rental assistance program, based on the Section 8 model,

which is based on the number of households that the grant is funded to serve. A portion of the eligible fee is for grantees that administer programs that serve households experiencing long-term homelessness (LTH). The percentage rate schedule is based on the following:

# of Households targeted in Grant	Percentage Available for Rental Assistance Administration	Percentage Available for Rental Assistance Administration of programs serving LTH	Maximum Percentage Available for Rental Assistance Administration
0 – 10	8%	2%	10%
11 – 25	7.7%	1.8%	9.5%
26 – 50	7.6%	1.5%	9.1%
51 – 100	7.5%	1.3%	8.8%
101 – 250	7.3%	1.1%	8.4%
251- 500	7%	1%	8%
501- 1000	6%	1%	7%
1001- 2000	5%	1%	6%

Compensation for Applicants/Grantees who serve large geographic areas. An additional \$5 a month, per household, may be added onto the maximum eligible administrative fee to compensate for the additional time and travel expense associated in administering programs that cover a geographic service area of a 50 mile radius or larger.

Please reference the following examples of calculating administrative fees for a program that administers a Section 8 model:

- Scenario #1: An applicant that received \$432,000 for 24 months to serve 30 long-term homeless households. The eligible fee would be 9.1% of their total grant. This equates to \$55 a month for each assisted household (total grant award * eligible percentage /24 months/# targeted households).
- Scenario #2: An applicant that received \$300,000 for 24 months to serve 34 long-term homeless households over a large geographic area that exceeds a 50 mile radius service area. The eligible fee is 9.1% of the total grant. This equates to \$38 a month for each assisted household (total grant award * eligible percentage/24 months/# targeted households + \$5 per household large geographic area fee).

The agency will approve fees that are reasonable and fairly compensate for the administrative work involved of the proposed rental assistance program and when justified, may set the floor rate at \$45 per household per month, and a ceiling of \$60 per household per month.

3.13 Future Funding

Funding for the Bridges/ELHIF program will be allocated through a Request for Proposal (RFP) or renewal process. Minnesota Housing and DHS may follow one, both or a combination of each of the following funding processes for a biennium:

- Applications for continued funding may be requested from all current interested Bridges/ELHIF programs. Current Housing Agencies providing Bridges/ELHIF may be considered based on the results of management reviews, need, and utilization.
- New Bridges/ELHIF applications may be solicited with preference given to Housing Agencies proposing to operate in areas under-served in rental subsidies for persons with serious mental illness.

Chapter 4 – Intake/Eligibility/Certification

4.01 Eligibility Criteria

The basis for Bridges/ELHIF eligibility is as follows:

- The head of household or other household member must be 18 years of age or over, and have a diagnosed serious mental illness (Form 4) as defined in the Comprehensive Mental Health Act;
- Are income eligible to receive a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher subsidy or who can definitely become eligible to receive a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher based on successful participation in the Bridges Program (this subsidy will only be provided if the person is on a waiting list or formally agrees to be on a waiting list when one is opened); and
- The gross income, at the time of initial eligibility, of the household is at or below 50 percent of the area median income for the household size.
- For programs administering ELHIF Funds, the head of household or other household member must have a diagnosed serious mental illness and meet the definition of long-term homelessness.

4.02 Outreach

Information about Bridges/ELHIF should be widely distributed by the Adult Mental Health Initiative, Local Mental Health Authority and Housing Agency to all persons with a serious mental illness. Information needs to be also provided to Regional Treatment Centers, community-based residential treatment facilities (Rule 36s), homeless shelters, transitional housing programs, board and lodges, county case managers, community mental health centers, drop in centers, and community support programs. Persons who reside outside the county, but for whom the county assumes financial responsibility, should also be informed of the opportunity to apply for Bridges/ELHIF.

The Adult Mental Health Initiative/Local Mental Health Authority is primarily responsible for outreach. The Cooperative Agreement should describe the plan to conduct outreach.

4.03 Intake/Screening

The applicant needs to fill out and sign an Application for Bridges/ELHIF Program and a Government Data Practices Act and Disclosure Statement. The Adult Mental Health Initiative (AMHI)/Local Mental Health Authority (LMHA) must verify that the head of household or another adult household member has a serious mental illness as defined by the Comprehensive Mental Health Act. The AMHI/LMHA must have a mental health professional sign Form 4 and submit it to the Housing Agency in a timely fashion. For households being referred for ELHIF funds, the AMHI or LMHA must also verify their eligibility based on the long-term homelessness definition. At intake for Bridges/ELHIF households, information regarding the household's

previous living situation prior to program intake and extent of homelessness shall be collected and submitted on the Minnesota Housing participant eligibility and recertification form.

As part of intake activity, the Adult Mental Health Initiative/Local Mental Health Authority must:

- Inform applicants that receiving the Bridges/ELHIF subsidy may reduce other forms of aid that may be received such as food stamps and Minnesota Supplemental Assistance (MSA);
- Inform applicants that they are eligible for mental health case management services and community support program services and make referrals for these services if applicant agrees to a referral;
- Advise applicants that receipt of services is not required in order to participate in Bridges/ELHIF; and
- Inform applicants that, as a condition of receiving Bridges/ELHIF subsidy, they must **be eligible to receive a subsidy** and apply for and accept a federal or other permanent housing subsidy when one is offered.

The Adult Mental Health Initiative/Local Mental Health Authority and Housing Agency may wish to develop a form to be given to each applicant that incorporates the above information.

4.04 Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Waiting List Requirement

Bridges/ELHIF participants are required to apply for and accept a federal or other permanent housing subsidy such as the Section 8 Program. The Housing Agency must require applicants to complete a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher application if they are currently not on any waiting list. If Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher waiting lists for the area are closed, the applicant must agree to sign up for Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher as soon as the waiting list opens.

While the participant is receiving a Bridges/ELHIF subsidy, the Housing Agency and Local Mental Health Authority/Adult Mental Health Initiative shall monitor the applicant's status on Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher waiting lists or make certain that the participant does sign up for Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher as soon as a waiting list opens. Participant files shall contain a copy of the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Application verifying the status on the waiting list/s or documentation that the waiting list is closed and the participant will sign up as soon as a waiting list opens.

If a participant does not accept a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher subsidy, becomes ineligible for a subsidy, or refuses to apply for a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher as soon as a waiting list opens, the participant must be terminated from Bridges/ELHIF.

4.05 Final Eligibility Review

The Housing Agency will fill out a worksheet (sample Form 8) to determine the applicant's final eligibility. The worksheet calculations will determine the housing assistance payment (HAP). Calculations of a HAP are based on gross income.

Income limits for Bridges/ELHIF are based on 50 percent of the area median income as defined by HUD.

4.06 Informal Hearings/Appeals

Applicants and participants may request an informal hearing to contest a determination made by the Local Mental Health Authority or Housing Agency concerning eligibility to participate or for continued participation in Bridges/ELHIF. The LMHA will be responsible for disability related eligibility appeals. The HA will be responsible for housing issues. The HA will use procedures established for use in their Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher administrative plan.

At an informal hearing, the applicant or participant must be given an opportunity to view all documents and information used to make the decision and must have an opportunity to present his/her own evidence in support of eligibility or continued eligibility.

The applicant or participant must be allowed to have the Local Mental Health Authority assist them in their appeal. The hearing should be conducted by an individual who did not take part in the original decision that is being contested. Applicants and participants must be notified, in writing, of the outcome of the hearing and be informed of the reasons for the determination.

4.07 Calculating Gross Income

Gross income includes all income projected to be received in the next 12 months by all household members age 18 and over, excluding the income of a non-related person who is living in the household solely to care for a disabled, handicapped, or elderly household member. When computing gross annual income, include the actual income earned from assets, such as interest or dividends.

Gross income includes but is not limited to:

- Amount, before any payroll deductions, of wages and salaries, overtime pay, commissions, fees, tips, and bonuses;
- Net income from operating a business or profession or from rental of real or personal property;
- Interest and dividends;
- Amount of periodic payments received from Social Security, annuities, insurance policies; retirement funds, pensions, disability or death benefits, and similar types of periodic payments;

- Unemployment, disability, or workers' compensation or severance pay, and similar types of payments in lieu of income;
- Public assistance payments;
- Periodic allowances such as alimony, child support, gifts/contributions received from persons not residing with the participant; and
- Regular and/or special pay, and allowances for a member of the armed forces who is the household head or spouse.

Gross income does not include:

- Casual, sporadic, or irregular gifts;
- Amounts specifically for reimbursement of medical costs;
- Inheritances, insurance payments, capital gains, settlements for personal or property losses, and similar lump sum amounts;
- Educational grants or scholarships paid expressly for tuition, fees, books, or equipment (amounts not for these purposes are counted as income);
- Combat pay for a participant head who is in the armed services;
- Relocation payments made under the federal Uniform Relocation Act;
- Foster care payments;
- Value of allotments such as Food Stamps and fuel assistance; and
- Payments made for persons participating in federal or state volunteer programs.

Assets to be evaluated include but are not limited to:

- Cash on hand in checking and/or savings accounts;
- Stocks and bonds;
- Life insurance policy redemption value;
- Net equity in real property; and
- Personal property held as an investment.

4.08 Verification of Income and Assets

HUD's Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Administrative Practices Handbook #7420.7 is used for explaining verification by a third party. Housing Authorities may use the procedure it has adopted in its Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher. Incomes and Assets to be verified are:

- Records of Earned Income:
 - Income tax return – State and/or Federal (most recent)

- Paycheck stubs
- W-2 forms
- Records of Other Income:
 - Pensions and annuities – latest check stub from issuing institution
 - Social Security – current award letter
 - Unemployment compensation – determination letter or latest check stub
 - Supplemental Security Income – award letter / most recent check stub
 - MFIP – award letter / most recent check stub
 - Worker’s compensation – determination letter, recent check stub
 - Alimony – copy of court order
 - Child support – copy of court order
 - Educational scholarships / stipends (federal Title IV grants are excluded) – award letter
 - Other public assistance – award letter
 - Income from assets – credit union / bank / s & L statements, etc.
- Asset Information:
 - Bank Statements
 - Stock / bond certificates
 - Mortgage note or property tax statement
 - Income tax return
 - Certificate of deposit

Verified information must be no more than 90 days old prior to the award of the Bridges/ELHIF certificate.

4.09 Waiting List

If the number of applicants for Bridges/ELHIF subsidies exceeds the number of certificates available, a waiting list must be established. The Cooperative Agreement must specify:

- Party responsible for the waiting list;
- Procedure for maintaining the list; and
- Procedure for making selections from the waiting list (using priorities identified in the agreement).

Bridges was designed and continues to support the following preferences:

1. homeless persons (including long-term homeless),
2. persons residing in a Regional Treatment Centers (RTC) or persons temporarily subsidized with state combined integrated funds,
3. persons residing in Community-based residential treatment Facilities, or
4. persons living in substandard and rent burdened units.

Other factors that may be considered in a waiting list include but are not limited to the following:

- Date and time of application;
- Level of participant income;
- Residency in the operating area; and
- Readiness of the applicant/participant for independent living.

The priority rating system developed by the Housing Agency and Local Mental Health Authority must be objective and must equitably rate potential participants. The Housing Agency and Local Mental Health Authority must **submit their waiting list selection plan to Minnesota Housing for review and approval.**

4.10 Preparation of the Certificate of Participation - Statement of Participant Obligation

Each participant selected to participate in Bridges will be issued a Certificate of Participation - Statement of Participation Obligation (Form 6). This document certifies that the participant is eligible for subsidy and outlines the conditions and procedures for obtaining the subsidy. A signed Certificate of Participation - Statement of Participation Obligation is required and is part of the participant's permanent housing Applicant/Participant Record.

The Certificate of Participation - Statement of Participation Obligation allows the participant 60 days to locate an eligible unit and submit necessary documents to the Housing Agency. If a unit is not located within the 60 days, the Housing Agency has the discretion of extending the Certificate for a maximum of 60 additional days. The Housing Agency must use the Form 6. The Certificate of Participation - Statement of Participation Obligation is issued at a briefing session held to explain program requirements to the participant.

4.11 Unit Size (Occupancy Standards)

The Housing Agency may use the Unit Size (Occupancy Standards) established for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher. The occupancy policy proposed for use in Bridges/ELHIF must be submitted to Minnesota Housing for review.

The bedroom size allocated to a participant must count full time household members, children expected to reside in the assisted unit, and any live-in attendant necessary to care for a

disabled, handicapped or elderly household member. The Housing Agency must count the child or children:

- of a pregnant woman,
- being adopted
- whose custody is being obtained
- in joint custody, as long as the child/children will live in the assisted unit at least 50 percent of the time,
- who are in the unit under foster care,
- temporarily absent due to placement in a foster home.

The Housing Agency and Local Mental Health Authority may establish criteria for granting exceptions to this requirement. Such exception criteria may include, but are not limited to the following:

- unique disability-related circumstances of the participant;
- availability of the specified size in the Housing Agency's operating area; or,
- housing market conditions prevalent in the Housing Agency's market area.

An exception policy must be in writing and submitted to Minnesota Housing for review and approval and be made part of the Cooperative Agreement.

4.12 Rent Limits

The maximum subsidy available to the participant is the difference between 30 percent of their gross income and the area FMR/payment standard or contract rent, whichever is less. The participant can rent a unit that exceeds the area payment standard, however, they are responsible for paying the difference. The maximum participant payment allowed is 40 percent of their gross monthly income. The Bridges program does **not** include utility allowances. Fair Market Rents or approved Payment Standards/ Exception Rents are periodically published by HUD and can be obtained by calling the Regional HUD office in Minneapolis. The Metro area FMR and payment standards are available on the Housing Link website.

4.13 Calculating Participant Rent

The participant's rent portion is calculated in a similar manner as the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher subsidy with the exception that the Bridges/ELHIF calculation uses gross income, not adjusted income. The minimum participant payment is 30 percent of their monthly income and the maximum payment is 40 percent of their monthly income. Participants can pay up to 40 percent of their monthly income if they choose a unit that exceeds the area FMR/Payment Standard. (Please note that the Bridges/ELHIF subsidy cannot pay anything more than the difference between 30 percent of the participant's gross monthly income and the area FMR/Payment Standard or the contract rent whichever is less).

If "Zero Income" is claimed by a participant, another verification must occur within 90 days and every 90 days thereafter. This verification requires the participant to provide a signed Zero Income statement to the Housing Agency until a source of income is established. The LMHA/AMHI will offer the participant assistance in obtaining and maximizing income if the participant wishes. It is important for the HA and the LMHA/AMHI to collaborate in order to serve the target number of households.

Shared units can only be provided if allowed under the Housing Agency's Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Standard. Calculation for shared households will be computed following Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Standards except for the use of gross incomes for the Bridge's applicant.

4.14 Briefing Session

The Housing Agency must schedule a briefing session for each participant receiving a Bridges/ELHIF Certificate for the first time. It is recommended that a Local Mental Health Authority representative attend briefing sessions. The Housing Agency may decide whether to hold individual or group sessions. If group sessions are held, the participant's income and rent discussions must be conducted privately.

A briefing must cover the following topics:

- Overview of the Bridges/ELHIF program
- Explanation of the participant's obligations listed on the Certificate
- Review of the calculation (Worksheet, Form 8) of the participant's rent
- Review of the lease approval process and the content of the forms, emphasizing provisions of the Request for Lease Approval (Form 10), that must be incorporated into landlord generated leases
- Key requirements in state law affecting landlord/participant relationships;
- Responsibility of the participant to pay the participant rent as well as utility expenses not paid by the landlord
- Review of the Housing Quality Standards (HQS) requirements a unit and property must meet to be eligible
- Geographic area in which the Housing Agency may execute contracts with landlords
- Assistance the Local Mental Health Authority and Housing Agency can provide if a participant needs help in locating a unit or in receiving supporting services

At the session, the participant signs and receives the Certificate of Participant - Statement of Participant Obligation (Form 6). Participants receive a Briefing Packet containing:

- Index to the Briefing Packet

- Participant Rent/Maximum Rent
- How to Find a Rental Unit
- Information for Owners of Rental Property
- A Good Place to Live - HQS
- Summary What to Do
- Fair Housing Minnesota
- Your Rights as a Participant

The following documents must be included:

- Request for Lease Approval
- Certificate of Participation - Statement of Participation Obligation
- Rules for Continued Eligibility

The Housing Agency may include additional materials that would be useful for the participant.

Chapter 5 – Leasing Process

5.01 Freedom of Choice in Selecting Units

A major goal of Bridges/ELHIF is to assist persons with serious mental illness and/or person with serious mental illness who are also long-term homeless to live independently in all types of conventional rental housing that may be available in the Housing Agency's operating area. While participants may need advice about finding a unit, understanding legal requirements, and options for making a selection, they have full responsibility for making the final choice. The Housing Agency and Local Mental Health Authority may not directly or indirectly reduce a participant's opportunity to choose from any potentially eligible unit. The information and assistance given to participants in locating housing must also provide a broad range of choice to prevent undue concentration of participants in one building or area.

5.02 Eligible Units

Housing units eligible under Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher may be utilized by Bridges/ELHIF participants. Eligible units may include:

- Units owned or substantially controlled by a Housing Agency, if:
 - All of a property's units are available for occupancy by the general public;
 - Rents are Market Rate and subsidized only with Bridges/ELHIF funds; and
 - Minnesota Housing receives assurances that a participant was given choices of other housing in the operating area.
- Units that were constructed with federal or state assistance such as Section 236 or Farmer's Home (FmHA) provided that:
 - Rents approved for Bridges/ELHIF participants are the market rate for the building; and
 - No other “deep subsidy” (i.e. rent based on 30 percent of income) is provided to the Bridges/ELHIF participant.

Bridges/ELHIF assistance cannot be provided for the following:

- Units within or established by public or private institutions that provide psychiatric or medical services such as:
 - Nursing homes or psychiatric hospitals/facilities;
 - Board and care facilities; or
 - Other facilities such as independent group residences established specifically to serve persons with serious mental illness.
- Landlord occupied units, unless the participant leases a portion of the unit, such as a basement that contains a private entrance, private bath, and private kitchen.

- Space rental for a landlord occupied mobile home.

5.03 Utility Allowances

Utilities Allowances are not provided in the Bridges/ELHIF program.

5.04 Inspections - HQS

All properties and units to be leased by Bridges/ELHIF participants must be inspected by the Housing Agency or a contracted housing professional certified to perform HQS inspections. A standard federal form (or a version approved by HUD) must be used for reporting. **Units must pass the inspection before the Housing Agency makes a housing payment to the landlord.** No subsidy payments may be made for a period when the unit was not in compliance with HQS. Exceptions would be made ONLY for unusual circumstances fully documented in the participant file.

Units must be inspected at least annually at renewal. A copy of all HQS inspections must be kept in the participant's Applicant/Participant Record.

5.05 Portability

Bridges/ELHIF participants must lease a unit within the jurisdiction of the Housing Agency in which they applied. The Bridges/ELHIF subsidy is not “portable.” Subsidies must be within the geographic area of the HA.

5.06 Leasing Procedures

The procedure for processing Bridges/ELHIF leases is like the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher:

1. The participant locates a suitable unit;
2. Participant submits a signed Request for Lease Approval (Form 10);
3. The Housing Agency conducts an HQS inspection;
4. When the unit passes the HQS inspection,
 - a. the Bridges/ELHIF Contract (Form 14) is signed and
5. the Lease is signed.

The term of the lease may not extend beyond one year. The Housing Agency, at its sole discretion, may permit lease terms from one month to twelve months.

A copy of the lease, **HQS Inspection Report** and the Bridges Contract (Form 14) must be retained in each Applicant/Participant Record.

5.07 Lease Amendment/Extension

The lease provides for a renewal after the initial term. Renewals may be month to month or longer up to a maximum of one year. Renewals are based on continued funding from Minnesota Housing.

A Lease Amendment/Extension (Form 13) must be signed at the time of a lease expiration or notification of a landlord rent increase.

5.08 Security Deposits

The security deposit may not exceed one month's rent and cannot be paid until after a unit passes inspection.

If the participant cannot afford to make a security deposit and no other resource is available within a reasonable amount of time, the Housing Agency, upon request of the participant, must pay the security deposit to the landlord using Bridges/ELHIF funds.

A security deposit may be retained when a participant:

1. Leaves a unit and the unit has no damages;
2. Leaves a unit and the unit has damages;
3. Stays in a unit, goes off of Bridges/ELHIF and does not receive a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher or a permanent subsidy; or
4. Stays in a unit and goes onto Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher or another permanent subsidy.

If a participant leaves a unit and there are no damages or the participant stays in the unit, goes off Bridges/ELHIF and does not receive a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher, the participant retains the security deposit plus interest. A participant can only retain one rental security deposit.

If the participant leaves a unit and the unit has damages or unpaid rent and/or unpaid utilities, the landlord retains all or any part of the deposit to pay for unpaid rent and/or unpaid utilities or damages to the unit or property. The landlord must provide documentation to the Housing Agency and participant that the deposit, plus interest, was used to offset expenses.

If the participant stays in the unit and receives Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher, the security deposit is used for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher security deposit.

5.09 Payment Terms

The Bridges/ELHIF rental payment is equal to the contract rent less the participant payment. Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) will be made by the Housing Agency to the landlord on behalf of participants when all payment terms have been met.

- The participant's rents a unit within HUD published Fair Market Rent or Payment Standard or if it exceeds these rates, that the participant's payment does not exceed 40% of their monthly income;
- The participant's unit has passed a Housing Quality Standards inspection;
- The landlord and the Housing Agency have signed and dated a Bridges/ELHIF Contract; and
- The participant and landlord have signed and dated an approved lease.

The landlord may not charge more rent for assisted units than for comparable unassisted units. The landlord may not assess additional charges to the participant for items not included in the rent unless all other participants pay the same charges for the same items. All additional charges (i.e. garage rental, cable T.V., storage lockers, pet deposits) must be described in the Lease and approved by the Housing Agency.

Subsidy payments on behalf of participants meeting the above requirements for payment will continue until the participant receives a permanent housing subsidy, becomes ineligible, voluntarily withdraws from the program, or the Bridges/ELHIF program terminates.

The contract rent plus actual cost of utilities may be paid on behalf of participants who has a crisis and has income diverted. Such payments may be made for up to ninety days. Written documentation on such situations must be retained in the Applicant/Participant Record.

5.10 Eligible Payments

The following types of payments may be made with Bridges funds:

- Direct payment to landlord for the Housing Assistance Payment portion of the rent;
- Payment to landlord for security deposit;
- Payment to landlord for contract rent for up to ninety days during a medical and psychiatric crisis; and
- Participant's Applicant/Participant Record must be properly documented prior to eligible payments.

Chapter 6 – Occupancy Guidelines

6.01 Interim Changes

All decreases in the participant's gross monthly income, regardless of the amount, must be verified and implemented on the next first of the month after the Housing Agency received the information about the decrease (i.e. a verified decrease in income reported in June would result in a reduced participant rent on July 1). Written notice of the change should also be sent to the participant and landlord.

Participants who wish to add another adult to the lease must inform both the Housing Agency and the landlord in advance. A participant shall be informed that they must seek the landlord's permission to add an additional adult to the participant's lease or they could be evicted. The landlord may deny permission of an additional adult, based on the landlord's usual participant screening procedures. All income of the additional adult must be verified and added to the participant's gross income. A lease amendment may be used to add an additional adult to the lease.

The participant is not required to report to the Housing Agency the addition of a minor to the lease. The sample Bridges/ELHIF Lease and most landlords' leases do not require reporting additional minors. It is not necessary to issue the participant a new Certificate of Participation - Statement of Participant Obligation at the time there are minors added. If a larger unit is needed, a new certificate is issued when the participant terminates the current lease and seeks other housing.

A Lease Amendment/Extension may be used if the participant moves from one unit to another unit in the same building or another building owned by the same landlord. An HQS inspection must be conducted for the new unit before the participant moves or payment is made for the new unit.

6.02 Annual Recertification

The income (including asset income) of all participants must be verified on an annual basis. At each Annual Recertification, the participant must sign a new Consumer Agreement for Requirements for Continued Eligibility (Form 7) and the applicable agency release of information forms.

For participants with an annual lease, the recertification should coincide with the effective date of a new lease. It is not necessary to verify income if the most recent interim change was done within the last 90 days. If the verification indicates that the participant's gross monthly income equals or exceeds the full rent for the assisted unit for three consecutive months, then the participant will be declared ineligible. Participants whose income is determined ineligible must be notified in writing and given the option of requesting an informal hearing if they disagree with the findings.

The landlord may increase the rent only upon the expiration of the lease term and execution of a new or renewal lease. In the case of properties which are subject to a HUD approved increase, such as 236 or FMHA buildings, an increase in rent may be implemented upon HUD approval of the new rent and upon sufficient notice to the participant and Housing Agency. A lease and contract amendment should be used to change the unit rent. A copy of the HUD rent approval letter should be inserted in the participant's Applicant/Participant Record.

When negotiating a renewal rent, the Housing Agency may, at its discretion, use the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Annual Adjustment Factors (AAF) to limit the amount of the landlord's rent increase. If the AAFs are not used, the Housing Agency must determine that the requested rent is reasonable based on the HA Section 8 Housing Voucher Choice rent reasonableness system. A participant's contract rent may not exceed contract rents paid by unassisted participants at the same property.

6.03 Lease Termination

Participant Chooses to Move. When a participant **chooses to move**, written notice by the participant must be given to the landlord and HA in accordance with the lease. If participant intends to continue receiving a Bridges/ELHIF subsidy, they must additionally notify the Housing Agency at 30 days plus 1 day before they intend to move. If the LMHA/AMHI is aware of a tenant's move, they must notify the Housing Authority if the participant has not done so. If the participant intends on continuing with Bridges/ELHIF after moving, the Housing Agency must issue the participant a new Certificate of Participation - Statement of Participation Obligation (Form 6) and Request for Lease Approval (Form 10). When the participant locates a new unit, the Housing Agency must use the same procedures as described in Leasing Process (Section V of this document).

Unit Does not Meet HQS. If, at recertification, the Housing Agency determines that **the unit is not in compliance with HQS**, the Housing Agency must give the landlord a "reasonable time" to correct the deficiencies. The Housing Agency may retain HAP (subsidies) until the unit meets HQS. If the landlord fails to comply in a "reasonable time", the Housing Agency must notify the landlord and the participant in writing that subsidy payments will be suspended and the Bridges/ELHIF Contract terminated. If the participant wishes to continue receiving a Bridges/ELHIF subsidy at a different location, they must be issued a new Certificate of Participation - Statement of Participant Obligation (Form 6) and Request for Lease Approval (Form 10). The HA should notify the LMHA.

Landlord Gives Participant Notice to Move. The landlord may give the participant notice to move (not connected with an eviction) only if the lease provisions permit such a notice. The HA should notify the LMHA. The procedures described in 6-C-1 of this document are used if the participant wishes to locate to a new unit and continue to receive the Bridges/ELHIF subsidy.

Landlord Issues an Eviction Notice to Participant. If the landlord issues an eviction notice, the requirements of the lease and state and local laws must be followed. The Bridges/ELHIF provisions permit the landlord to evict the participant for:

- Serious and repeated lease violations;
- Violations of federal, state or local law in connection with the occupancy or use of the unit and surrounding premises; or
- Other good cause.

The landlord must send a copy of the eviction notice to the Housing Agency at the same time it is served on the participant. The participant may, at the Housing Agency's discretion, remain eligible for Bridges/ELHIF, subject to the provisions of Termination of Eligibility (6-D) and the Consumer Agreement for Requirements for Continued Eligibility, and may seek other housing. The HA should notify the LHMA.

One of the benefits of the cooperative agreement between the HA and the LHMA is that collaboratively they are available to respond to tenant and landlord issues, assisting in resolving conflicts before they lead to eviction. The service component of the Bridges/ELHIF package, especially the availability and responsiveness of the service provider is a recognizable asset noted by most landlords renting to Bridges/ELHIF participants and can be promoted when marketing the program to private market landlords.

6.04 Termination of Eligibility

A participant's eligibility to continue receiving subsidy under Bridges/ELHIF may be terminated for the following reasons:

- 30 percent of Gross monthly income equals or exceeds full rent;
- Failure to apply for, accept, or utilize Section 8 housing subsidy;
- Failure to report all income, additional adults or having a zero income for over 6 months;
- Illegal drug related or violent criminal activity;
- Bridges/ELHIF certificate expired;
- Now receiving Section 8 or other housing subsidy;
- Voluntary termination;
- Unable to live independently;
- Skipped out/unable to locate;
- Evicted or in danger of eviction and not following a treatment plan;
- Refusal to cooperate with re-certification or HQS inspection process;
- Or Deceased.

All participants must have the option to request an informal hearing similar to a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher informal hearing to contest the termination of their subsidy. The procedures to be used in conducting informal hearings are described in Intake/Eligibility/Certification (Section 4).

The administrator must report to Minnesota Housing the reason why the household ended their participation in the Bridges/ELHIF program. Reporting on household terminations is submitted on the Minnesota Housing monthly payment request form.

Appendix 1

SAMPLE OUTLINE FOR A COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT BETWEEN HOUSING AGENCIES AND LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES/ADULT MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES

Updated January, 2011

The coordination of housing and supportive services is critical to helping many individuals with a serious mental illness live successfully in community settings. This document is a "blueprint" for a Cooperative Agreement between housing agencies (HAs) and local mental health authorities (LMHAs). Since 1997, Local Mental Health Authorities have regionally self selected to be a part of Adult Mental Health Initiatives (AMHIs) in the State of Minnesota. LMHAs, working together in an AMHI, enter into this agreement at the award of each new grant.

This outline is intended to describe the respective roles and responsibilities of HAs and LMHAs in the process of coordinating housing and supportive services. Although the details of such an agreement will **necessarily reflect the needs of a specific community**, the unique features of the parties entering the agreement, the needs and wishes of applicants and participants, and other local circumstances, the goal will be the same--to assist individuals with serious mental illnesses in obtaining and retaining stable housing within their community. This outline was updated in January 2011 to recommend increased partnership and communication between the HA and AMHI/LMHAs.

I. PARTIES:

Designates the parties entering into the agreement (the HA and the AMHI).

II. TERM OF AGREEMENT:

State the duration of the agreement, usually for the biennium of Bridges/ELHIF funding in the legislature.

III. PURPOSE:

States the purpose – *for example*: to help persons with a serious mental illness and/or persons with serious mental illness who are also long-term homeless to access appropriate housing, treatment and supportive services, and income supports --to promote cooperation between a housing agency and an Adult Mental Health Initiative.

IV. GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

State the guiding principles of the Cooperative Agreement.

For example:

- A. Individuals with serious mental illness and individuals with serious mental illness who are also long-term homeless will have fair and equitable access to

housing. Awarding of housing subsidy will be based solely on meeting eligibility criteria, not on participation in service programs.

- B. The housing agency (HA) and the adult mental health initiative (AMHI) jointly recognize that:
1. Persons with serious mental illnesses and/or persons with serious mental illness who are also long-term homeless are diverse in terms of their strengths, motivations, goals, backgrounds, needs, and disabilities.
 2. Not all individuals with serious mental illness and/or individuals with serious mental illness who are also long-term homeless who apply for housing will need to be clients of the mental health authority or linked to support services in order to live successfully in the community.
 3. People with serious mental illnesses and/or people with serious mental illness who are also long-term homeless are members of the community with all the rights, privileges, opportunities, and responsibilities accorded other participants and applicants.
 4. People with serious mental illnesses and/or people with serious mental illness who are also long-term homeless have the right to meaningful choices in matters affecting their lives.
 5. In developing the Cooperative Agreement, the input of participants and consumers in the community will be sought.
 6. Nothing in the agreement precludes the mental health authority from providing services to housing applicants or participants who are not mental health authority clients and who request mental health services while the agreement is in effect.
- C. Therefore, the agency and adult mental health initiative resolve:
1. To make available as many housing options as possible, coordinated with supportive services and tailored to meet the needs of each person with serious mental illnesses and/or persons with serious mental illness who are also long-term homeless;
 2. To assure that housing and supportive services are, to the extent possible;
 - a. based on the individual's needs, preferences, and desires;
 - b. safe, decent, and accessible to transportation;
 - c. offered in the least restrictive manner; and
 - d. flexible in terms of site, intensity, and schedule.
 3. To work cooperatively to achieve the stated purpose.

V. RESPONSIBILITIES:

Lists the responsibilities of the agency and initiative and the clients to be served, the services available to clients, the site of services, the times available, and the manner in which these services can be obtained (there is a checklist of responsibilities in the procedural guide, pages 18 - 20).

For example:

A. The adult mental health initiative will (as agreed to by the local mental health authorities):

1. Be responsible for identifying and referring to the HA low-income individuals in need of housing who have serious mental illnesses and/or individuals who have serious mental illness who are also long-term homeless. This may include determining initial eligibility of the serious mental illness and/or when applicable, the long-term homelessness status. This may also include assisting clients with the application process and in determining their best options given the housing eligibility criteria and requirements for residency.
2. Inform clients of the range of housing options that could meet their needs and preferences. Encourage clients to consider all appropriate housing in the community.
3. Provide assistance to clients in understanding rights and responsibilities under a lease. This would include explaining the eviction notification and appeal process.
4. Provide consultation to the housing agency in the management of disputes or differences between participants or between participants and the housing agency.
5. Provide assistance, advice and services to individuals with serious mental illness who are experiencing problems related to housing in resolving disputes or differences with other participants or with the housing agency.
6. Encourage clients to make rental payments in a timely manner.
7. Assist clients in maintaining the unit in good repair.
8. Provide emergency response on a 24-hour basis to participants and/or the housing agency.
9. Provide certification, with the consent or agreement of the applicant or participant, that the AMHI/LMHA is providing and will continue to provide services to the applicant, when applicable and required to meet the screening criteria of the housing agency. Such assistance may continue as long as the applicant requests it, throughout his/her tenure in housing.

10. Provide, or identify and refer to specific agencies to provide, any necessary mental health and support services to participants, as needed and as agreed to by the participant. These services may include the following:
 - a. case management services;
 - b. diagnosis and treatment of serious mental illnesses;
 - c. Services targeted to assist participants in maintaining their housing and/or preventing future episodes of homelessness;
 - d. rehabilitation, vocational training, and employment assistance;
 - e. income support and benefits;
 - f. general health care and dental services;
 - g. alcohol and/or other drug abuse treatment;
 - h. consumer and family involvement; and
 - i. legal protection (including protection provided under civil rights laws, such as the Fair Housing Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990).

B. The housing agency will:

1. Provide to the AMHI/LMHA a copy of its formally adopted admission policies. The admission policy will include, but is not limited to:
 - a. a participant selection and assignment plan which covers:
 - the organization of the waiting list;
 - the method by which applicants will be chosen from the waiting list and offered available dwelling units, including any of the HA's selection preferences and their relative weights; and
 - the process for maintaining the waiting list, including notification of applicants, situations where the list may be closed, and monitoring the length of wait time.
 - b. the HA's standards for determining:
 - eligibility;
 - suitability for residency; and
 - the appropriate size and type of unit.
 - c. the HA's verification policy and procedures.

2. Provide to the AMHI/LMHA a copy of the HA's:
 - a. requirements for maintaining residency;
 - b. lease and grievance procedures;
 - c. policy regarding holding units for participants who are unavoidably absent from their units for a period of time, as in the case of extended medical or psychiatric crisis; and
 - d. specific policies relevant to the particular sites (e.g., congregate dining, pets).
 3. Provide to new participants an explanation of participant rights and responsibilities, including payment responsibilities.
 4. Provide to new participants an orientation covering such topics as what, if any, services are available at the housing site, what the housing site provides (e.g., laundry facilities, recreational-social activities), and who to contact in case of emergency or for repairs
 5. Work with appropriate supportive service agencies to provide information to new participants to familiarize them with the community resources.
- C. Both agencies will jointly:
1. Meet regularly during the term of the grant to review program performance, including referral and intake processes, housing choice, and consumer comments.
 2. Develop and regularly update a list of all the current housing resources available to persons with low incomes in the community, including all publicly and privately-owned assisted housing, consulting with the HUD field office to assure completeness of the list. This list should include both housing programs that are administered by the agency and those that are not.
 2. Work together to preserve and/or increase the supply of assisted housing available to persons with serious mental illnesses and provide as broad a range of choices (e.g., locale, level of services, integration with non-disabled persons) as possible by:
 - a. developing housing specifically designed for persons with serious mental illnesses and/or for persons with serious mental illness who are also long-term homeless; and
 - b. using local preferences and set-asides of units for persons needing supportive mental health services in ongoing housing programs.
 3. Administer all of its policies and procedures on a nondiscriminatory

basis in accordance with the Fair Housing Act which prohibits discrimination in the sale or rental of housing on the basis of handicap, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 which says that no persons shall be denied an opportunity to participate in or benefit from any Federally assisted program because of handicap. In particular, under the Fair Housing Act, the available units may be used by individuals with mental disorders, who are not referred by, or clients of, the mental health authority, but who meet housing program eligibility criteria.

4. Develop, in accordance with concerns for client confidentiality, a mutual referral process for any persons who is in need of, and who appears eligible for, mental health, supportive services, or housing. When referrals are made, the parties will ensure the coordination of support services and housing to the mutual client.
5. Collaborate and/or support the entity responsible for entering the client data into HMIS on behalf of long-term households assisted through ELHIF,
6. Provide technical assistance and training efforts to include:
 - a. training for mental health staff on HUD housing assistance programs;
 - b. training for housing agency staff on understanding serious mental illnesses, long-term homelessness, mental health programs and the service delivery system, and in recognizing the unique needs, strengths, and skills of individuals with mental health illnesses;
 - c. training for landlords and managers of rental units on the advantages of renting under the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher, understanding the client population, and the ongoing cooperative efforts between housing and mental health authorities to meet the housing needs of the population; and
 - d. training for both agencies on fair housing and reasonable accommodation requirements of the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.
7. Develop and document strategies for managing crises involving mutual clients.
8. Identify and adhere to requirements or standards regarding confidentiality of client information, such as requiring the client's permission to release information to either agency.

9. Involve clients and, as appropriate, family members in efforts to plan, deliver, monitor, and evaluate the quality of housing and supportive services.

VI. PARTICIPANT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Describe the rights and responsibilities of participants. For example:

- A. No participant will be evicted or otherwise penalized by the HA solely for terminating status as a recipient of services from the AMHI/LMHA, provided they continue to fulfill essential residency requirements specified in the lease signed by all tenants.
- B. A participant who begins to fail to meet residency requirements and who ceases receiving services from the AMHI/LMHA will, to the extent possible, have the opportunity to re-establish the service relationship with the AMHI/LMHA, or alternatively to make similar, equivalent arrangements with another agency chosen by the individual, which may assist in meeting residency requirements.

VII. IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION:

- A. Describes issues related to implementation and evaluation such as:
 1. How the agreement can be modified, amended or terminated;
 2. How problems in implementing the agreement will be resolved; and
 3. How the Cooperative Agreement will be reviewed to determine if the policies and procedures are effective in helping individuals access housing and maintain residence in a manner that is satisfactory to the individual, other participants, the AMHI/LMHA, the HA, and private housing managers and landlords.
- B. Designates liaisons to oversee, facilitate, and periodically monitor and evaluate the agreement.

Signatory (for HA)

Signatory (for AMHI/LMHA)

Appendix 2

Mental Illness

1.) Adults.

Minnesota Statute 245.462, subdivision 20, Mental illness. (a) *"Mental illness" means an organic disorder of the brain or a clinically significant disorder of thought, mood, perception, orientation, memory, or behavior that is listed in the clinical manual of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-9-CM), current edition, code range 290.0 to 302.99 or 306.0 to 316.0 or the corresponding code in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-MD), current edition, Axes I, II, or III, and **that seriously limits a person's capacity to function in primary aspects of daily living** such as personal relations, living arrangements, work, and recreation.* (b) An "adult with acute mental illness" means an adult who has a mental illness that is serious enough to require prompt intervention. (c) For purposes of case management and community support services, a "person with serious and persistent mental illness" means an adult who has a mental illness and meets at least one of the following criteria:

- (1) the adult has undergone two or more episodes of inpatient care for a mental illness within the preceding 24 months;
- (2) the adult has experienced a continuous psychiatric hospitalization or residential treatment exceeding six months' duration within the preceding 12 months;
- (3) the adult has been treated by a crisis team two or more times within the preceding 24 months;
- (4) the adult:
 - (i) has a diagnosis of schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depression, or borderline personality disorder;
 - (ii) indicates a significant impairment in functioning; and
 - (iii) has a written opinion from a mental health professional, in the last three years, stating that the adult is reasonably likely to have future episodes requiring inpatient or residential treatment, of a frequency described in clause (1) or (2), unless ongoing case management or community support services are provided;
- (5) the adult has, in the last three years, been committed by a court as a person who is mentally ill under chapter 253B, or the adult's commitment has been stayed or continued; or
- (6) the adult (i) was eligible under clauses (1) to (5), but the specified time period has expired or the adult was eligible as a child under section 245.4871, subdivision 6; and (ii) has a written opinion from a mental health

professional, in the last three years, stating that the adult is reasonably likely to have future episodes requiring inpatient or residential treatment, of a frequency described in clause (1) or (2), unless ongoing case management or community support services are provided.

2.) Child.

Minnesota Statute 245.462, subdivision 6, for purposes of eligibility for case management and family community support services, "child with severe emotional disturbance" means a child who has an emotional disturbance and who meets one of the following criteria:

- a.) the child has been admitted within the last three years or is at risk of being admitted to inpatient treatment or residential treatment for an emotional disturbance; or
- b.) the child is a Minnesota resident and is receiving inpatient treatment or residential treatment for an emotional disturbance through the interstate compact; or
- c.) the child has one of the following as determined by a mental health professional:
 - i) psychosis or a clinical depression; or
 - ii) risk of harming self or others as a result of an emotional disturbance; or
 - iii) psychopathological symptoms as a result of being a victim of physical or sexual abuse or of psychic trauma within the past year; or
- d.) the child, as a result of an emotional disturbance, has significantly impaired home, school, or community functioning that has lasted at least one year or that, in the written opinion of a mental health professional, presents substantial risk of lasting at least one year. The term "child with severe emotional disturbance" shall be used only for purposes of county eligibility determinations. In all other written and oral communications, case managers, mental health professionals, mental health practitioners, and all other providers of mental health services shall use the term "child eligible for mental health case management" in place of "child with severe emotional disturbance."